



**June 9th**

## **Feast Day of St. Columba**

Pentecost is one of the critical feasts of the Christian year. There will be a great amount of reading and preaching about the significance of Pentecost, and we should listen very carefully to all of it. But if you look in the Lectionary, you will see that it is also the feast day of Columba, Abbot of Iona (521-597). June 9<sup>th</sup> is St. Columba's feast day so it is just a coincidence that his feast falls this year on Pentecost. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized that there is a strong connection between these two feasts. We will hear a lot about the action of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost today, but why do I think looking at Columba will add anything to such an important feast day? The connection is that the Holy Spirit was continuously active in Columba's life, and Columba's life illustrates how the Spirit works.

In his younger years he made some substantial mistakes by siding with political powers in his native Ireland and by supporting a rivalry that resulted in a substantial clan against clan battle, which sadly was very bloody. He recognized that he was guilty as the Spirit spoke to him, and his life was changed despite being seen as a high ranking cleric and a man gifted by God with great faith. And just as the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness after the temptations and settled on the disciples at Pentecost, the Spirit drove Columba in 563 from his homeland of Ireland. He and twelve friends traveled to the west coast of Scotland and settled on the Isle of Iona. Filled with the Spirit, Columba and his companions founded an extremely rigorous monastic community. The community grew and flourished; but eventually, after hundreds of years, the community declined and was abandoned. That was not, however, the end of the Spirit's work for Columba's Iona. Now it is a site of pilgrimage for many heeding the call of the Spirit, and a new community has restarted what Columba created. From that first community on Iona, Scotland was converted and Celtic Christianity flourished; and the Spirit has now called people to build a new community. Just as the disciples became filled with the Spirit, that same Spirit continues to inform and create; and like Columba, we too are filled with the Grace that the Spirit gifts to all. That gift from the first Pentecost has never ceased to be given to all who built and continue to build the Church and to all whom God loves: that is, everyone.

